

throughout his life. Victorian London takes on almost the presence of a character in the novels and stories, as fully realized—in all its fogs, back alleys and shadowy quarters—as Holmes himself. “Holmes could never have lived anywhere else but London,” says Lycett, author of the recent biography *The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes: The Life and Times of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*. “London was the hub of the empire. In addition to the Houses of Parliament, it had the sailors’ hostels and the opium dens of the East End, the great railway stations. And it was the center of the literary world.”

Much of that world, of course, has been lost. The British Clean Air Act of 1956 would consign to history the coal-fueled fogs that shrouded many Holmes adventures and imbued them with menace. (“Mud-coloured clouds drooped sadly over the muddy streets,” Conan Doyle writes in *The Sign of Four*. “Down the Strand the lamps were but misty splotches of diffused light which threw a feeble circular glimmer upon the slimy pavement.”) The blitz and postwar urban redevelopment swept away much of London’s labyrinthine and crime-ridden East End, where “The Man With the Twisted Lip” and other stories are set. Even so, it is still possible to retrace many of the footsteps that Conan Doyle might have taken in London, to follow him from the muddy banks of the Thames to the Old Bailey and obtain a sense of the Victorian world he transmuted into art.

HE FIRST ENCOUNTERED LONDON at the age of 15, while on a three-week vacation from Stonyhurst, the Jesuit boarding school to which his Irish Catholic parents consigned him in northern England. “I believe I am 5 foot 9 high,” the young man told his aunt, so she could spot him at Euston station, “pretty stout, clad in dark garments, and above all, with a flaring red muffler round my neck.” Escorted around the city by his uncles, young Conan Doyle took in the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey and the Crystal Palace, and viewed a performance of *Hamlet*, starring Henry Irving, at the Lyceum Theatre in the West End. And he went to the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud’s wax museum, then located in the Baker Street Bazaar (and on Marylebone Road today). Conan Doyle viewed with fascination wax models of those who had died on the guillotine during the French Revolution as well as likenesses of British murderers and other arch-criminals. While there, the young man sketched the death scene of French radical Jean-Paul Marat, stabbed in his bath at the height of the Revolution. After visiting the museum, Conan Doyle wrote in a letter to his mother that he had been irresistibly drawn to “the images of the murderers.”

More than a decade later, having graduated from medical school in Edinburgh and settled in Southsea, the 27-year-old physician chose London for the backdrop of a novel about a “consulting detective” who solves crimes by applying keen observation and logic. Conan Doyle had been heavily influ-

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